

Business Roundtable News



BLACKSTONE RIVER STATE PARK VISITOR CENTER OPENS

Governor Donald L. Carcieri and DEM Director Michael Sullivan joined state, federal, and local officials on January 9 to celebrate the opening of the new Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center on Route 295 North in Lincoln.

The new state park entrance is a major gateway to the Blackstone River Bikeway, which stretches from Pawtucket to Worcester, MA. The park provides easy access to the Blackstone Bikeway via a new half-mile bikeway connection and offers people a convenient location to park their vehicles, unload their bikes, and buy refreshments. It also provides access to several focal points in the Blackstone Valley, such as the Wilbur Kelly House Museum, the Blackstone Canal, and the Blackstone River. The bikeway connection, currently graveled, will be paved in the spring.

Located on the northbound side of Route 295, the complex features a 9,700 square foot colonial post and beam visitor center and houses many tourist, park, and bikeway amenities, a private food concession offering Dunkin Donuts and Baskin Robbins Ice Cream, a Rhode Island State Police satellite office, and a satellite office for DEM's Division of Parks and Recreation. Restrooms, visitor information, and other amenities, including the food concession and the State Police satellite office, are available on a 24-hour a day basis. The facility also provides long-haul truck parking, allowing truck drivers to pull off the highway safely to sleep. It also serves as a bus stop for the RI Public Transit Authority, which began providing commuter connections to Providence in mid-January.

The project is a cooperative effort among DEM, the RI Department of Transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration. DEM is also working with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission to coordinate and provide visitor information.

Federal highway funds provided 80 percent of the construction cost, with the remaining 20 percent coming from state bond funds. DEM's Division of Planning and Development and the DOT design section provided staff assistance and project management. The same design team is presently working on design of a Route 295 southbound visitor center directly across the road, which is anticipated to go into construction in the spring of 2007.



The Blackstone State Park Visitor Center

Rhode Island Egg to Be Displayed at White House

Each year DEM's Division of Agriculture and Resource Marketing sponsors an egg-decorating event in Rhode Island to promote local farm fresh eggs. The winning egg represents Rhode Island at the annual display of decorated eggs from each state at the White House.

The winner of this year's egg-decorating event was Curtis Perry, M.D. of North Kingstown. Perry chose to depict the theme "Discover Rhode Island" to encourage people to explore the natural beauty and recreational resources that the Ocean State has to offer. Perry transformed a Grade A large brown chicken egg, donated by Little Rhody Egg Farms in Foster. The shell opens like the petals of a flower to create a setting for a sculpture of a little girl discovering a seashell at the water's edge. He enhanced the beach motif by shaping each of the eggshell "petals" surrounding the sculpture to suggest an ocean wave.



This is the first egg that Perry, a cosmetic surgeon and sculptor by profession, has decorated for the yearly White House display. The egg will be shipped to Chicago on January 30 to be reviewed by the American Egg Board. From there, the Rhode Island egg will be sent to Washington, DC for display at Eastertime at the White House visitors' center.

Greenhouse Gas Update

On January 5th, DEM Director Michael Sullivan kicked off Phase V of the Greenhouse Gas Stakeholder Process by thanking stakeholders for the important work they have done over the last few years.

The Group is credited with researching and promoting numerous strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Rhode Island, including: passage of a Renewable Portfolio Standard Law requiring electricity suppliers to purchase an increasing percentage of renewable energy every year, ultimately reaching 16% by 2020; passage of an Energy and Consumer Savings Law requiring that a number of common household electric appliances, as well as furnaces and boilers, sold in the state be more energy efficient; adoption of California low emissions standards for vehicles; and, adoption of Executive Orders to lead-by-example by making efficient state buildings and state vehicles more energy efficient.

In this phase, Stakeholders will work on initiatives such as: establishing a program similar to the existing systems benefit charge (SBC) on electricity for all fuels to encourage efficiency and renewable energy; developing a program to transfer state lead by example efforts to cities and towns and schools; and, working with federal agencies and other states to establish a consistent system for evaluating, monitoring and tracking carbon savings as a result of implementing GHG reduction programs.

For more information about the Greenhouse Gas Stakeholder Process, visit <http://righg.raabassociates.org/>.

RIWINDS: Renewable Energy for Rhode Island

Governor Carcieri recently announced an initiative to produce fifteen percent of the state's energy needs through wind generation. Producing electricity through renewable energy sources such as wind will produce many benefits associated with diversifying our energy supply. These include energy benefits such as: stable energy prices, electric system reliability, and energy independence. Economic and environmental benefits include job creation, lower total energy costs for consumers, reduced emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases that pose risks to public health and the environment.

Carcieri appointed Andy Dyskevich of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (EDC) as chief energy advisor to oversee the initiative. EDC has issued a Request for Proposals to conduct a feasibility study to determine if it is possible to produce that much wind-generated electricity in Rhode Island and to identify specific sites that are suitable for wind turbines. Site suitability for wind power includes technical and financial feasibility as well as the site's potential to be permitted by the various state and local authorities.



Rhode Island hopes to spur wider use of renewable energy technologies. Above, a wind turbine on Block Island provides power to a home.

Potential sites for wind farms could be on-shore, off-shore and in more than one location. The turbines do not have to be in the same place. Wind turbines sited in several locations may be make them more acceptable than placing them in one large wind farm.

The State's current energy demand is approximately 1,000 megawatts per year. Wind generators are about 50% efficient so the project would have to produce 300 MW to deliver the goal of fifteen percent.

The deadline for proposals is February 24. Dyskevich expects it may take three to five years to complete the feasibility study, obtain permits, and construct the facilities.

Regulatory Updates

Accelerated Permitting

The Department held public hearings on December 23, 2005 and January 13, 2006 on a proposal to implement a pilot program for accelerated wetland and septic system application processing. The accelerated application process would allow certain applications to be processed on an overtime basis, for an additional fee. The fee would pay for the staff costs of DEM employees to perform advanced reviews of select applications before or after normal working hours.

At the hearing, proponents of the proposal said they believe it offers benefits for all applicants. The process could reduce application processing times for applicants who want to pay for an overtime review. Other applicants might also experience quicker service, since there would be fewer overall applications that need to be reviewed during normal working hours.

Opponents expressed concern that the pilot regulations provide better government services on the basis of who pays more and that those who decline to pay more may get even slower service. Some also expressed concern that developers would pass the cost on to their clients making the permitting process more expensive. The Department is evaluating the comments from the public hearing.

Used Oil Regulations

Amendments to the state's hazardous waste regulations for management of used oil are expected to be in place in early March. The amendments will provide protective oversight while being less costly for businesses to implement and should facilitate the recycling of used oil.

Under current regulations, used oil generators may be classified as hazardous waste generators depending on the characteristics of their used oil. Under the revised regulations, a new category will exist for used oil generators that recycle or reclaim their used oil. Such generators would not need to register with DEM as hazardous waste generators. In addition, used oil generators will be able to store up to two dozen 55-gallon drums of used oil without a time limit, and they would have up to 180 days after exceeding the 24 drum accumulation limit to ship excess drums off-site. Generators will also be able to self-transport up to 55 gallons of used oil per shipment to a used oil burning or processing facility, and can burn used oil onsite as an alternative fuel in specific burners. Generators of used oil only will not be required to develop a hazardous waste contingency plan or provide hazardous waste management training to employees.



Among businesses that would benefit are auto service centers, trucking companies, and companies that use oil in their manufacturing processes. DEM worked with members of industry and local environmental groups to draft and refine the amendments, which have subsequently been reviewed and approved by the US Environmental Protection Agency. The revised regulations are available online at DEM's website, by clicking on "Compliance and Inspection" under "Programs" or by calling DEM's Office of Customer & Technical Assistance at 222-6800.

Vehicle Emissions

On January 11, Rhode Island became the 8th state to adopt California Vehicle Emissions Standards. The new standards will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% and save consumers money over the lifetime of new vehicles.

The standards will be phased in over the 2009 through 2016 model year period. Auto manufacturers can meet the new requirements with existing technology, some of which is already being used on vehicles today, the Governor said. The amendments will apply to new vehicles sold in Rhode Island beginning with model year 2009.

While the cost of new vehicles meeting the greenhouse gas standards is expected to increase approximately \$1,000 by 2016, that increase will be offset by increased fuel efficiencies with these more fuel-efficient vehicles. With gasoline at \$2.20 per gallon, a vehicle owner can expect to save \$170 per year during a five-year loan period.

NEW! Check Freshwater Wetlands Status On-Line

The public can now view the status of individual freshwater wetlands applications via Rhode Island's e-government portal, www.RI.gov. The service is free, and allows homeowners, builders, and anyone else interested in a wetlands application to track the progress of the application or find out whether DEM has received one. The website is available 24-hours a day and the information is updated daily.

Users can query by application number, owner/organization name, project name, or location to help locate information about the status of a wetlands application. The website lists the current status and the dates of all major actions from the date the application is received to the date of the final agency action. To access the wetlands information, go to www.RI.gov or to DEM's website, and click on "Wetlands" permit search on the homepage.

Narragansett Bay And Watershed Restoration Bond Fund

DEM is finalizing regulations to create the Narragansett Bay and Watershed Restoration Bond Fund. The Fund will receive, hold and administer the use of \$8,500,000 portion of the RI Open Space, Recreation, Bay and Watershed Protection Bond allotted for "anti-pollution projects and restoration activities benefiting Narragansett Bay and state watersheds."

The Fund will provide up to 50 percent matching grants for nonpoint source water pollution abatement or riparian buffer restoration projects. A total of \$7.1 million is earmarked for governmental projects to mitigate, control, or eliminate the effects of nonpoint source pollution. An additional \$700,000 is earmarked for similar projects undertaken by non-governmental entities. The remaining \$700,000 is for governmental and non-governmental agencies or individuals to restore riparian habitats or enhance the overall quality of riparian buffers for water quality improvement or protection.

The regulations are expected to become final in February and the grant application process will commence soon after. A statewide announcement will be issued prior to the start of the application period. The regulations are available at DEM's Office of Water Resources, 222-3961 or on the DEM website.

Hazardous Waste Generation Fee Collections on Target

DEM has released its annual report for fiscal year (FY) 2005 on Hazard Waste Generation Fees. In FY05, the Department collected \$1,040,466.21, slightly exceeding the \$890,000 target. In January 2003, the Department began collecting the fee of 2 cents per pound (or 16 cents per gallon) from Rhode Island hazardous waste generators for waste transported on a hazardous waste manifest. Some of the money funds programs within the Office of Waste Management and a portion is set-aside in a contingency fund for site remediation projects that are an imminent threat to human health and the environment and lack a responsible party.

In October of 2005, the Department changed the fee structure to exempt all non-hazardous waste required to be transported on a manifest. The fee was accordingly increased to 2.3 cents/gallon to keep on target with the goal of collecting \$890,000.

The full report showing monthly collections and waste types is available on DEM's website. For additional information, please call Mark Dennen in the Office of Waste Management at 222-2792, extension 7112.

Earth Day 2006

Earth Day Rhode Island and the Department of Environmental Management have once again teamed up to celebrate the 36th Anniversary of Earth Day April 22, 2006 with activities throughout the month of April. Events include community cleanups around the state and special programs throughout Conservation Week, April 17 through April 21 at Roger Williams Park Zoo. The annual Earth Day Festival, on Saturday, April 22, will take place at Warwick Mall from 10 am - 5 pm.

Last year, Rhode Island businesses helped make Earth Day an overwhelming success. With their support, Earth Day Rhode Island conducted over 60 neighborhood clean-ups and more than 44,000 visitors came to Roger Williams Park Zoo to celebrate Conservation Week and the Earth Day Festival and learned about environmental issues and stewardship throughout Rhode Island.

Here are just a few ways your business can get involved:

- Sponsor Earth Day.** Your sponsorship will make it possible to spread the message of environmental awareness, foster participation in community cleanups and support scholarships for students entering environmental studies. Earth Day Rhode Island offers a variety of sponsorships opportunities. Each sponsorship includes name recognition in education and outreach efforts, appreciation awards and website advertising.
- Organize a Neighborhood Cleanup.** Many companies find that organizing a cleanup is a good way to show your neighbors that you care about the community and to foster team spirit among employees. DEM provides cleanup bags and gloves to organizations that organize cleanups.
- Show Off Your Company or Product at the Rhode Island Earth Day Festival.** The Rhode Island Earth Day Festival on Saturday, April 22 offers an excellent venue to promote your company's environmental products, programs or stewardship to the thousands of Rhode Islanders who attend each year. The Festival features environmental exhibits and demonstrations, food, music and good old-fashioned family fun.

If you are interested in aligning your business with a cleaner and greener Rhode Island, please call Terri Bisson at 222-3434, extension 4402 or Jeff Fornaro at 949-2187 or visit the Earth Day website at www.earthdayri.org.

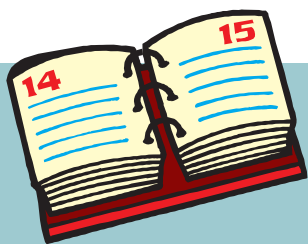


Signing up to be an Environmental Watchdog at the DEM booth during Earth Day 2005

Summer Jobs Available at DEM

The Department of Environmental Management is continuing to recruit applicants now for both its 2006 seasonal employment program and its minority internship program.

Information about DEM and all summer positions, as well as a downloadable application form is available on DEM's website. Applicants can also visit or call DEM's Office of Human Resources at 235 Promenade Street, Room 350, Providence, weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., or call 222-2775, ext. 4609. The number for DEM's telecommunication device for speech and hearing impaired callers is 222-4462.



Upcoming Events/Meetings

February 1

Environment Council of Rhode Island Monthly Meeting,
7 PM, Audubon Society of RI Headquarters
12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield.

February 3

Rhode Island Food Forum, 8:30 AM - 1:30 PM, Brown University, Sharpe Refectory Dining Hall, Providence. Forum on building connections between local farmers and local businesses, schools and institutions. For more information, visit www.farmfreshri.org.

February 7

Rhode Island Earth Day Committee, 5:30 PM, DEM Headquarters, 235 Promenade Street, Providence. Room 320C.

February 16

Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Stakeholder Meeting, 9 AM, DEM Headquarters, 235 Promenade Street, Providence. Room 300.

February 16

Environmental Roundtable Meeting, DEM, Room 300, 235 Promenade Street, Providence, 3-5 PM.

March 1

Environment Council of Rhode Island Monthly Meeting,
7 PM, Audubon Society of RI Headquarters
12 Sanderson Road, Smithfield.

April

Earth Month, Check www.earthdayri.org for a complete listing of cleanups and events to celebrate Earth Day 2006

April 5

Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Stakeholder Meeting, 9:00 AM, DEM Headquarters, 235 Promenade Street, Providence. Room 300.

April 7 & 8

Forestry and Wood Expo, Community College of Rhode Island, Warwick. Campus. Kick off event for the 100 year anniversary of RI's state forestry agency. Includes seminars, business luncheons with panel discussions, and workshops. For more information, call/email: Cathy Sparks, 647-4389 or csparks@dem.state.ri.us; or, Marc Tremblay, 568.3421 or info@rifco.org.

April 17-2

Conservation Week, Roger Williams Park Zoo, Providence, RI 11 AM to 3 PM each day.

April 22 - EARTH DAY

Earth Day Festival, Warwick Mall, Warwick. 10 AM - 5 PM

May 17

Rhode Island Agricultural Day - State House, Providence. Details to be determined.